

The Taun-taun Episode

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Summary: A bunch of pilots + taun-tauns. You do the math. Chaos is gurranteed.

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Author's Note: Okay, you people know the drill. None of this belongs to me. The characters either belong to George Lucas or Michael Stackpole(the best SW writer ever). This is my first fanfic so I hope you like it. Read Author's notes at the end for some comments.

The Taun-taun Episode

Wedge Antilles could not feel a single part of his body. _The Empire might be doing us a _favor _by attacki_ng _this_ _base, _Wedge thought to himself. _It'd be nice to get away from this frozen world. I can't stand all this cold. _Wedge did know, however, that Hoth had been chosen for the Rebel base because of its harshness. The Empire would never think that the Rebels were foolish enough to use Hoth as a secret base.

Wedge had just finished his patrol of the deserted snow plains of Hoth. It would not have been so bad if the snowspeeders had already been adjusted to the cold, but they had not. Instead of flying, all the patrollers had to use the local transportation, which happened to be taun-tauns. These bipedal creatures left riders wishing that the cold had also taken away their sense of smell along with their ability to feel. _But it sure beats walking._

Having grown up on Corellia, Wedge was not comfortable on Hoth. _The only time I ever _saw_ snow was on a vacation with my family and even then we were just passing through. _Wedge tried to stop his train of thought as he changed out of his winter gear. Thinking back to those days brought back painful memories he would like to forget. Wedge's parents had been killed by reckless pirates. The pirates had been trying to escape CorSec officials. At the age of 16, Wedge had hunted

down the murderers and destroyed them. Wedge knew that most Rebels had similar tragic stories, but the Empire had caused them. He sighed and ran a hand through his brown hair. Lots of people had been hurt and orphaned because of the Empire._ Which is why I'm here. To prevent this from happening to anyone else. _

After his parents' death, Wedge had become a member of the Rebel Alliance. He had always been kidded about his age. Despite his youth, Wedge had proved to be a better pilot than the most experienced Rebels. In only a few missions, he was able to become an ace and make friends to fill the void the death of his parents had created. _But that didn't last very long. _Wedge made a sour face. On Yavin IV, a previous base, Rebels had been attacked by the Empire's super-weapon, accurately called the Death Star. The Death Star had seemed invincible, but the Empire made one mistake: They were too overconfident. They had believed that snubfighters would not damage their creation. Snubfighters, however, ended the Death Star. Many pilots had died to destroy the Death Star. Wedge and Luke Skywalker were almost the only ones to survive. _I lost a lot of good friends there. Biggs, Porkins, and many more. I'd love to repay the Empire someday. _

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After Yavin IV Wedge had been on a series of missions. Currently, he was part of a squadron led by Luke Skywalker. When command had asked for ideas concerning the name of the squadron, Wedge had suggested Rouge Squadron. Back at Yavin IV in Red Squadron, Wedge's commanding officer had always called Wedge and his squadmates a bunch of rouges. Wedge smiled as he remembered his squadmates antics. The name would honor them. Rouge Squadron would be a group of elite pilots that would give the Empire a run for its credits.

Wedge looked around his small quarters. There was barely enough room to move, which was why he spent most of his time in the training room or the messhall. Even though the room was small Wedge still shared it with another pilot, Wes Janson. Wedge did not know quite what to think of the cherry faced pilot. Janson flew a Y-wing and was talented at it. He was a little older than Wedge but could pass as being the youngest person on the base. It wasn't his youthful features or flying talent that perplexed Wedge. It was the young pilot's love of practical jokes. Wedge had made it a point to Janson that no jokes should be held in their quarters. _He's a good friend, but I have to wonder how he's able to avoid getting caught so many times._

The door slid open, interrupting Wedge's thoughts. Wes Janson strode in, "Hey, Wedge, the simulators for the Incom T-47 repulsorlift speeders have come in. We're suppose to go and try `em out."

Wedge buttoned up his jacket. "What's the point of practicing on them if they aren't even able to run in the cold?" Wedge asked, yawning.

"Oh, quit being lazy. The techs'll have the combat speeders running in no time."

"Okay, okay." Wedge sighed. "I just got back from patrol duty. I think I'll get a bite to eat first."

"Fine with me. I think I'll join you. Too bad we can't drink anything stronger than juice. I could really go for some Lomin ale." Janson started heading out the door. "Does it seem to you that we're always at alert status? I'm getting tired of juice. I think command just wants to make our lives miserable. What's wrong with a pilot being happy?"

Wedge followed Janson into the narrow hallway. "Well, Wes, nothing really unless you don't mind dying. The pilot might be happy but a drunk pilot will be a dead pilot. If hostiles show up, the pilot gets sloppy and Boom." Wedge made a hand gesture, "Bye, bye pilot."

"Ah, I see your point." They lapsed in a thoughtful silence until Janson spoke up again. "Hey, look. It's our brave and lovable commander! Hooray! My day is now complete."

Luke Skywalker rounded a corner with an easy smile on his face, his blue eyes shining. "That's enough out of you. You know, you don't have to be a rouge to be in a rouge squadron."

"But it can't hurt to be one, now can it?" Janson said with a merry face.

"Where are you headed Luke?" asked Wedge forestalling anymore comments from Janson.

"I've got patrol duty in ten minutes, and I'm not all too pleased," Luke answered. "I've never ridden anything like a taun-taun before."

"Don't worry. It's not too bad." Wedge assured Luke. "Except in rare cases when someone plays a joke on you, and your taun-taun gets spooked causing it to throw you off leaving your body in a broken heap that even the MD droids can't fix."

"Um, thanks, I think." Luke began to feel a bit more nervous than he was before. He tried to change the subject. "Say that reminds me, I haven't heard of anything about your practical jokes lately, Wes."

"Actually, I have one in the works right now. It should occur any moment now." Janson peered over Luke's shoulder. Down the hall was Derek "Hobbie" Kilvian, a pilot in Rouge Squadron. Janson looked intently. "3 . . . 2 . . . 1---" A yell escaped from Hobbie's room. A grin blossomed on Janson's youthful features. "My work here is done." He turned abruptly on his heel and retreated down the hallway whistling a happy tune.

Luke and Wedge exchanged a look then ran to where Hobbie's quarters were. A very angry Hobbie erupted out into the corridor. "WHERE IS HE?! Sithspawn! I'll kill that Janson!" Hobbie's lean face was contorted in rage.

"What happened?" Wedge inquired, his dismay growing.

Hobbie gestured dejectedly to the room. "See for yourself."

Inside stood a crate that was high enough to reach Wedge's waist. Its size dominated the tiny room, as did the smell. Wedge pinched his nose to block out the stench. On the crate there was a label. It read

"**Taun-taun Manure**." "By the Emperor's Black Bones." Wedge cursed. "What was Wes thinking?" Luke shut the door to Hobbie's room allowing them to breathe again.

Hobbie seemed to calm down enough to become his usual pessimistic self. "I'll never get the smell out of the room." He sighed mournfully.

Luke looked around bewildered. "I'm late, so I've got to go. We'll have to get that out of there some how. How did Janson manage to get that thing in there?" He asked almost to himself. He waved goodbye to the two pilots and begun his way toward the hangar.

Wedge started to steer Hobbie toward the messhall. He placed an arm around Hobbie's shoulder. "Don't worry Hobbie. We well get him back for this, definitely."

"Oh, goodie." Hobbie's eyes had a mischievous glint in them. "Wouldn't it be easier just to shoot him?"

"Maybe. But when we're done with him he's going to wish we had shot him. What we want to do is annoy him. And annoy him we shall."

* * *

"Are you ever going to accept a promotion Wedge?" asked Tycho over his mug of caf.

"Nah," said Wedge as he put the finishing touches on the dish he was preparing. "Once you start on the path of promotions you're a general before you know it and out of starfighter command."

Tycho arched an Alderaan-cultured eyebrow. "Hm— your lips move, but I hear Hobbie's voice."

"Hey!" an injured Hobbie spoke up. "I'm not always pessimistic. I prefer to call it being logical."

Wedge chuckled. The Corellian had a mess sprawled around him at a cooking station in the messhall. Other Rebel members were located at various tables eating and talking. Wedge looked up to see someone pass by quickly. "Hey, where's Dak going in such a hurry?" The young pilot had rushed past his friends without even noticing them. "Is something wrong?" Concern was written all over Wedge's face.

"Oh, it's nothing." Answered Hobbie in a dismissive tone.

"What do you mean it's nothing? He has been acting really weird lately." Tycho gave Hobbie a disapproving glance.

"I'm not trying to be insensitive or anything, you know." Hobbie sniffed. "Do you guys know that new, good looking commando, Lieutenant Kaya Cien? Well, Dak's sweet on her." Mirth was filled in Hobbie's eyes.

"I guess that would explain his strange behavior." Tycho gazed at the door Dak had exited and saw Janson enter the room. "Wedge, is your masterpiece ready yet?"

"Sure is." Wedge piled food onto three plates.

Janson sauntered up to where the three pilots were gathered. "Hi, you're not still mad about my little joke, are you? Your guys should appreciate my ingenuity."

"That's right, Wes." Tycho said calmly. " We do appreciate your ingenuity, but could you find a better way of expressing it? Especially since I share quarters with Hobbie." Tycho picked up his fork and began to push his food around in a bored manner.

"Whatcha guys eating? It looks good."

Wedge smiled. "Well, my childish friend, it's new food that has been brought in. It's more edible than what they usually give us."

"Ah, yes. I guess I should be happy that they don't give us ration bars. They're more useful as a weapon than as food. On bite and all enemies would keel over." Janson chuckled, then eyed Wedge's food. "Can I have a taste?"

"No. Go get your own." Wedge put a protective hand over his food.

"Greedy. Just let me try some pleeeeaase."

"Okay. Here. Fine. As long as I don't have to listen to your whining." He shoved the plate at Janson roughly.

Janson took a healthy sized proportion on his fork and proceeded to stick it in his mouth. He immediately began to cough uncontrollably. "Sithspit, Wedge, that's awful!"

Wedge beamed but managed to put an injured not in his voice. "What? You don't like the taun-taun I made?" Wedge looked at Janson's shocked face. "Yes, I am telling you the truth. You just ate taun-taun." The three pilots erupted into laughter, as Janson's complexion became ashen. He made a hasty retreat toward the refresher station.

"Prank one complete." Wedge looked down at the food he had prepared. "I didn't think it was that bad. Chewie came by earlier, and he liked it."

Tycho gave Wedge a blue eyed stare. "Uh, Wedge, you do know that Wookies eat things that humans can't digest, right?"

"Yeah, Wedge, you got to admit that it's pretty gross." Hobbie said smiling at his friend. "I wouldn't give that for a battle dog to eat."

"Hey, Wedge, where are you going?" Tycho called.

Wedge had gotten up and now stood at the exit. The pilot turned around. "I'm going to get some sleep."

"But you still got to clean the dishes."

"You two geniuses can do them. Oh, and by the way, don't insult my cooking again." With that Wedge left.

Hobbie frowned. "When did Wedge become so mean?"

Tycho shook his head as he cleared of the cooking station. "That's just the wrath of Wedge Antilles."

* * *

The next day Wedge walked into the squadron's briefing room where Hobbie and Tycho already were in deep conversation. _I wonder what Luke has in store for us._ Wedge sighed. _At least we probably get to fly._ He sat down next to Tycho.

Tycho turned around to Wedge. "Do you think Luke's heard of our little prank war? Is that why we are here?"

"No. This is a mission briefing for us four pilots, but that's all I know. Oh, look. Here comes the fourth pilot now."

Janson walked in with dark circles under his eyes. His cheery disposition was gone. He dropped into the seat next to Wedge. Wedge cocked an eyebrow at Janson. "What's with you? You look like something the nek battle dog drug in."

"Didn't you get any sleep last night?" Hobbie inquired.

"Well, it's kind of hard to sleep when you hear a recording of taun-taun mating calls all night long." Janson growled. "By the way, where were you last night, Wedge?" Janson shot Wedge an accusing glare.

"I felt a little sick and spent the night in the infirmary." Wedge answered innocently.

"Yeah. I bet. I'm gonna---"

Janson's threat was broken off when Luke Skywalker entered the room. The pilots snapped to attention. Luke returned the salute. "A supply ship is coming to the base. You four are going to be it's escort. It's not the best work," Luke smiled apologetically, "but it's better than patrol duty. You'll leave at 0800, standard time. Any questions?"

Wedge shook his head. "No questions here. This will be pretty uneventful, but I'd do anything to get back into space."

Luke laughed. "I envy you guys. You better go and get ready."

They started toward the hanger. Wedge heard Janson mutter under his breath. "At least there won't be any taun-tauns." Wedge grinned.

* * *

Janson was sleeping fitfully after successfully completing escort duty. Wedge's prediction was correct. _Nothing_ important had occurred during the mission. They had gotten back late at night and had somehow managed to make it to their bunks where they promptly fell asleep.

Janson was awakened by the sound of movement. He did not bother to open his eyes. "Wedge, go back to sleep. You especially need your

beauty rest." Even with his groggy mind he could sense that Wedge was standing over him. "I mean it, Wedge. Go back to bed!" Janson pushed at Wedge only to find that what he had pushed was too furry to be Wedge. Janson immediately snapped his eyes open to see a taun-taun staring him in the face.

Laughter vibrated around him. Next to the door stood Wedge, Hobbie and Tycho. The pilots could barely contain their merriment.

"Wakey-wakey Janson." Wedge called in between fits of laughter.

Janson shot the jokesters a glare that would make a Hutt squirm. Janson uttered one word in a low voice. "Why?"

Tycho grinned. "You deserved it, my friend."

"Especially since you played that little joke in my quarters." Hobbie smirked at Janson's uneasiness.

"Okay, I admit it. I've finally been beaten at my own game." Said Janson reluctantly, but a smile tugged at the corners of his mouth. "Will you please get the taun-taun out of here?"

Wedge leaned against the wall and frowned. "Only if you say you are sorry."

Janson could tell by the stubborn look on Wedge's face that he would not budge unless he got what he wanted.

Janson took a big breath. "Okay. I'm real sorry. Now can we get this thing out of here?"

"Sure." A smile returned to Wedge's face. "You should've seen your face. It was priceless!"

Janson grunted. "Hey, we better get going before the whole base wakes up."

Tycho grabbed the reins of the taun-taun. Wedge took the lead as they began to sneak down the icy corridors to the hangar bay. Janson followed closely behind Wedge trying vainly to stay awake. Wedge stopped abruptly causing Janson to hit heads with him.

"Did you guys hear something?" Wedge asked anxiously.

Janson pushed Wedge playfully down the hallway. "I didn't hear nothin', and don't make any more sudden stops." Janson rubbed his head gingerly.

Wedge made a face at the cheery faced pilot and turned the corner to run right into the commanding officer of the base, General Rieekan. The pilots stood in shock.

General Rieekan took in the pilots and the taun-taun in one look. After a moment of silence, he cleared his throat. "I probably do not want to know the answer to this butâ€¦ Why are you pilots in the corridor with a taun-taun?"

Janson elbowed Wedge in the stomach and whispered in a mocking voice, "Yeah. Why _do_ we have a taun-taun, O Brilliant One?"

Wedge gulped. The Corellian tried to override panic by taking a big breath before starting. "Well, sirâ€|we were uhâ€|umâ€|" _Better think of something fast, Wedge. _"It followed Janson to his quarters." Wedge said in a rush. "Yeah, the taun-taun and Wes became good friends while on patrol, and the taun-taunâ€|uhâ€| missed him."

The General gave Wedge an evaluating look. "Hmâ€| Is that so? Well, with that in mind you pilots should clean all of the taun-taun stalls, so no other taun-tauns will become lonely, of course." He stared all the pilots in the face. "I dare say that you will make many more _'friends.' _I suggest you start tomorrow morning or more accurately, now since it is now morning." General Rieekan pulled out a data pad as he walked past the pilots, his eyes never leaving the pad. The four pilots stood in silence for a long moment.

Hobbie sighed, the mirth gone from his eyes. "We better put the taun-taun up, so we can get dressed and begin _work_."

After the pilots had brought the taun-taun back to the stables, they began their way morosely to their quarters. Dak caught sight of the Rouges and approached them as the base was waking up around them.

"Why do you guys look so melancholy?" Dak asked after a look at their faces.

Wedge waved a dismissive hand. "We just got caught doing a practical joke and now we're in trouble. It's nothing, really." Wedge said calmly, although his eyes betrayed his weariness.

"Sure, it's nothing." Janson muttered sarcastically. His head came up suddenly. He seemed to remember something. "Dak, why are you talking with us anyway? Shouldn't you be with your lovely lieutenant?"

Dak flushed slightly. "Hey, we're just good friends. Kaya's not my type, really."

Hobbie sighed as they reached his quarters. "Well, it really doesn't matter. I just can't believe we've gotten ourselves into this mess."

"Look on the bright side, Hobbie." Tycho advised lightly. "This'll be nothing compared to the trouble Wes' next joke will probably get us into."

Janson looked stricken. "I don't know whatever you mean. Never again. I promise I will never play another practical joke as long as I live." Yet even as he said this, a new prank was forming in his mind. Certainly a prank was different from joke. At least according to Janson's thinking. The other pilots knew this, but did not mind too much. Being a prankster was what made Janson, Janson. Whether they admitted it or not, they would not want Janson any other way. All they could do was hope that another taun-taun episode would not resurface, but if it did they would enjoy every nano-sec of it.

Author Notes: Whew, finally, it's finished! Don't be mad if I got anything wrong. I based this story on one of Tycho's comments in _Bacta War_. I sadly own only one of the many comic books. [sigh] So sorry if they're out of character. Anyway! We all know that the pilots only put up with Janson because later they finally get revenge (yub, yub Lieutenant). I was sadly not able to have my favorite character, Corran(if you couldn't tell by my name), in the fanfic. I will, however, be writing about Corran's stay at CorSec after I finish my long list of much procrastinated fanfics.^.^; If you have any comments about my story or just Star Wars, I would be happy to converse with you. Please Review! Thank you! ^o^

End
file.